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Week 17: Spring Mission Feeding

Mission Special #1

Isak and Terri Pretorius

Luke Redmon

Isak: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm really excited to welcome you to the show today. We're here in Northern Uganda. We've been in Sudan and Uganda this week just traveling all over. I've got my wife Terri with me and James' grandson, Luke Redmon. And we're just really excited to be able to share a little bit with you of what our week has entailed. The things that we've seen, the heart-breaking stories, the reality of what people are facing here each and every day as they struggle to survive.

Luke, Terri, you guys, we've been through it this week. Just seeing people who literally have lost absolutely everything. Who, their homes are gone; they're living under trees, just a makeshift shelter under some trees because they're trying to find somewhere where there is food and water.

Luke, I'm really interested to know how this has impacted your heart, what you've seen.

Luke: As you know, from such a young age, my grandparents, as well as your parents, who I've referenced for years as my African parents, have been the reason I've had such a heart for the poor.

I've been on these trips before and I can honestly say I've not seen anything like this; just the extreme poverty, the injustice of literally these people, they didn't ask for this. They were born into this. No food, children just sick because of that.

So I've not seen it like this never. I've never been on a trip like this that we're in such a crisis. They're broken. And they can't do anything about it. Moms walking three and a half weeks to try and just get help for their child. It is beyond heart breaking.

Isak: And it is a genuine brokenness. These mothers, you know, these mothers don't cry easily. And to see the tears running down some of their cheeks.

Terri: What I've seen in the last few days in the line of these mothers and what they have to face in terms of seeing that brokenness and witnessing that firsthand because these are mothers who would do anything for their children. But they have nothing. They don't even have food. And then that feeling of despair that as a mother they failed their child. So they're just are so traumatized, and just the feeling of worthlessness and brokenness to a degree --

Isak: And that is, for me, in some ways like two themes that have come out as we've spent this week and we've traveled around, there have really been brokenness, that absolute brokenness to see mothers that are just broken as they've buried their child, some of them just a few days before we got there. The other was hope. And the fact that hope really is a game changer.

It is not just nice to have for these people and yet we are that hope, and I think that's an important piece to clarify. They don't have hope unless we're here. But they know we're here, they see what we're doing, they know that we can extend the heart of God and the hands of God to them and that's what's giving them that hope.

And yet, then almost the sense of terror and fear in me that well, what if we don't have the resource to honor that hope, to actually make it possible, to ensure that our programs continue here, that we provide that bowl of food, that gift of life because it genuinely, genuinely is a gift of life?

Luke: The difference when we visit the villages that might not have mission feeding yet, they've not experienced that, versus the ones that have. I mean the life and the children that are in that village is just -- you can't even compare it.

Isak: You just see that difference, that transformation. That's why we'd like you to just watch this piece as we take you on a little bit of a journey through our journey this week. Let you see

the places we've been, what we've been through to get there but most importantly, how mothers are struggling, how their children are fighting for life each and every day. Watch this piece.

On the mission field

Isak: Now 200,000 plus children die every single month from malnutrition alone. They die in a village like this. They get buried with a little wooden cross with their name etched on it.

Announcer: Over the past week our mission team has traveled throughout South Sudan and Uganda overwhelmed by the devastation of countless families fighting an unrelenting crisis.

Isak: We've sat with mothers here today, mothers that are grieving the loss of their children. They've explained to us that those children have died because of malnutrition, because of starvation, literally, because there is no food in this village. There is no livestock. There is no crops. There is no food at all.

Announcer: Our team witnessed further heartache in the malnutrition clinics where mothers have risked long journeys with their children for just the hope of a life-saving miracle.

Luke: I've been in places like this. Now you have your own kid that's about the same age as all them and it just -- you just can't fathom if your own child was going through something like this.

Announcer: With these dire circumstances spread throughout South Sudan, thousands of mothers have embarked on the treacherous journey seeking food.

Luke: It's not God's heart to see mothers wonder what they're going to feed their children when they wake up in the morning. So today, I'm asking you to be the solution, be the answer to these mothers and children's prayers.

End of clip

In the studio

Isak: You've just seen and had a taste of a bit of our journey this week; the places we've been, the villages and the mothers that have interacted with us. You've seen the conditions that people are living in, and the absolute heartache and the reality of what life is for so many of these families here. It's broken our hearts this week.

Luke, I know from that first walk-in, I saw you walk into that first clinic and just -- I just could see that heartbreak. I know that feeling. You see your child there.

Luke: I've not been here since I've been a dad. And to walk in a place like that, [emotional] and see kids that are the same age as my precious little girl, who are on the verge of literally dying, not because of some unique or rare disease -- lack of food. To walk in there and just see these mothers who have done everything for their child, to help their child because it's ingrained in us as parents. So to see that, it was beyond overwhelming. You know what we're doing is real and is changing lives.

Isak: I think once you become a parent, it does have that shift. You have that change because suddenly now there is that identification of but that could be my child. This could be my life. How grateful would I be to the people that make it possible to save my child's life? And that's literally what's happening.

I know your relief because I know when we walk into clinics like that, when we go into villages where the conditions are that terrible, that life and death, it is a crisis, is actually the only way to explain it. How when that's the case, and I know we're there, somehow in the back of my heart, as much as it is breaking I feel this it's going to be okay, we're here.

Luke: Even the one we went to the second day we were here. Our team was there doing screenings basically, checking on kids, making sure their health was okay. Who's malnourished? What can we do for them? But I also had in that same village a mom come over and grab me because her child was lying inside there, about to die -- about to die! She just saw me and our

whole team as hey, maybe we could do something. And we can. And we can do something.

I just think, what if we would have gotten there just a few days earlier? What would have happened? It is beyond...

Terri: Speaking to that, Luke, we spoke to that woman who had arrived into the village where we were feeding and just had such regret when we spoke to her because she had had a baby die previous to that. Do you remember? And she just said, "I just regret because if I'd come here sooner, maybe my child would still be alive."

Luke: And they have to -- it takes a long to get to, some of these places are in such remote parts of the world. You saw the way we had to travel to even get to some of these places. So many even on the way to these clinics, they risk their children's lives just by traveling.

Isak: Many of the children die between the village and the clinic. Or between the village and villages where we are providing mission feeding or we're meeting the needs of that community. They actually die on the way there. That's why, that mother, it wasn't oh come see. It's a reach out that almost I feel like goes in and it grabs your heart and it says please, please you've got to help me! You've got to come see my child. You've got to help me! There is that desperation that says you are my only hope. You're my only hope. I'm relying on you. I'm counting on you. Without you, I don't know how this situation is going to end.

That's why I need you to understand today just how desperately we need you to help us in the conditions here in the villages that we're finding, we need you to open your hearts today. I need you to give the best gift that you can give because what you need to understand is your gift today is not just a gift that's going to change something, it is a gift of life because we're dealing with life and death.

That mother reached out. She said, "Luke, come here. Come and see my child. Please come help me."

Well, I'm reaching out to you right now and I'm asking you please, help us to help these children to save their lives.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and drought-stricken areas of Africa children are suffering. The need is great and without food they face severe malnutrition -- even death.

Through *LIFE's* mission feeding outreach you can save lives by feeding and caring for children currently suffering from starvation in parts of Angola, Mozambique and South Sudan.

With previous reserves gone and mission feeding helping in areas of great famine, we urgently need your support to replenish food supplies to reach the 400,000 children who are counting on us. Your life saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 will help feed and care for three, five or ten children.

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Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our commemorative bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

Please call write or make your gift online today.

End of clip

In the studio

Announcer: Our mission team recently traveled to South Sudan. While there Luke Redmon and Isak Pretorius encountered desperate mothers concern for their children's lives. One mother literally begged them to come into her hut. What they discovered was heart breaking.

Luke: I can't even imagine what it would be like as a mother to sit here with her child that is literally dying in front of them. We've been in this village most of the day and this mother who saw us was just like -- pulled us into her home. And when we walked in here there was almost like an overwhelming sense of death with nothing to give them right now or nothing that we could do right now in this moment. But she thought we could.

Announcer: It's sad to note this mother who caught the attention of Luke and Isak is just one of hundreds of mothers whose children are suffering, and in many cases dying because of the food crisis that is ravaging this area.

Isak: This mother was so right to pull us in here because we are the only life line for her and her child. But I need you to know that without you we cannot do this. We cannot save this child's life. We cannot honor this mother's call.

So I'm calling out to you today from the bottom of my heart. I'm asking you, please help us bring life to this child and so many other children in this village that so desperately need it.

Isak: You've just seen what a crisis this situation is right here and why we so desperately need your help. I really hope that as you've seen that and you continue to watch the show that you will do whatever you can do; that you'll dial that number, you'll give that gift, you'll give that gift of

life today. Please.

As we've continued our journey here we've just seen so many different things. It is so heart-wrenching. I know yesterday I saw how the tears were just flowing down your cheeks as you encountered some of what you're experiencing with these families that have just lost absolutely everything.

Terri: Yeah. It was horrifying when you and I were having a discussion and I spotted that little boy over your shoulder. He was just staring at us while we were talking. He just sparked my curiosity. So I walked over to him and sat next to him. I noticed on his wrist he was wearing one of those white bands that said "S.C.," separated child. And knowing that that child had been either witness to the slaughter of his parents, like so many of the other kids there, that he was there alone and scared, I just, it just really attacked the mother heart in me and the terror. I was just asking him simple questions, how old are you? And he was moving -- trying so hard to move his lips to get words out but his lips were just trembling and no words were coming out. This little guy was so traumatized that he was mute.

What do you say to that? And then you look around you and you just see that there are just hundreds more just like him and that story is just one of so many.

Isak: So many of these kids experiencing trauma that no child should experience. We saw that young girl, the tears running down her cheeks, 15 years old. She is now in charge of that household.

She grabbed her little brother of six and her sister of three, and somehow found the courage inside of her to pick them up and to run as she had just seen her parents and her one year old brother murdered in front of her. And then gets to that center where we are, where life is, where we're able to extend that hand and now starts to try and rebuild your life.

The reality is that for so many of these children, when we ask them, what is your greatest need? They say food. The first thing they say. Having seen what they've seen, the terror they've been

through, nothing but the clothes on their body is all they have, and yet the first thing they say is what I need most is food.

I want you to watch this piece now as we share a little bit more of the reality of what we've seen here. I know that this is going to help you to connect your heart as our hearts have been so connected to the lives that are so traumatized here, to this absolute crisis situation. Watch this piece now please.

On the mission field

Open captions:

>> I had two children. But my firstborn suddenly became sick with fever and diarrhea. She died three days ago.

Announcer: South Sudan is in crisis. The extreme heat and arid landscape are oppressive and unforgiving, leaving people of the land defenseless against the famine that afflicts them.

Open captions:

>> She would cry and say, "Mom, I'm hungry."

And I would have to tell her, "My child, I have nothing to give you." There is no food here.

Announcer: The vegetation here is so scarce mothers have no choice but to feed their children wild fruit that often proves to be toxic itself. As a result, countless children have lost their lives to poisonous food than malnutrition. Their mothers are left with both immense grief and crippling fear over the health of their remaining children.

For Nagu, the loss is very fresh. But mourning her daughter is a distraction she can't afford as she fights for the survival of her baby who has also fallen ill.

Open captions:

>> I am alone with no help, and I fear for my baby's life. I can only pray and ask God to help me.

It's my only hope.

End of clip

In the studio

Isak: To this mother, this is the very last thing she has. Her child is the last of what she's got. She's lost her husband. Just three days ago, she buried her four-year old child.

I can't begin to imagine what it would be like to live in this environment. We cannot bring mission feeding here unless you do what you can do.

Isak: Doesn't it just break your heart to see how these people are trying to live, how they're just trying to survive for many of them. And the reality of what a crisis, an absolute emergency this is.

Luke, we've -- I've seen it all on you, just all over you this week; just that impact, how it hits you square in the heart.

Luke: I mean you don't even have words to describe it, something so simple but causing so much pain --something so simple as food could do this to somebody. It's not just some thought up thing on the other side of the world. No, these are real lives, real people that are dying every day or at risk of dying every day because of nothing but a lack of food.

Isak: The situation is real. You've come, you've seen it. The mothers are real. And the reality is that some of their children, it's still a real fight. Others, that fight's been lost already. It's over.

Luke: Many have lost one child but they have another one.

Isak: And we can still save that one. That is why, I really appeal to you from the bottom of my

heart today. I fell apart a little bit yesterday because too many of those memories flood back. Too many children in my lifetime that I've seen, too many mothers I've spoken to whose hearts are broken.

Talking to mother after mother who have buried child after child. One who sat and literally, in desperation with tears flowing down her cheeks, explained the fear. The fear of losing that last child -- of losing her everything, her whole world because all she has left, husband gone because of no food, child gone because of no food. The last child, the only thing she has to hang onto and she looks me in my eyes and I see this hope that says please! Please, you're my hope. You're my only way. You're the only way that my world somehow stays just a little bit together.

I need you to understand today that you are my only hope. You see we are here. We've been asked by the international agencies to be here and to respond to this crisis and we're here. We just need you to help us to take that last step. That's why I'm reaching out to you. I'm looking at you today as that mother looked at me with an absolute urgency -- with a broken heart.

And I'm saying to you please, do whatever you can do. You need to do it today though. You need to give that special gift. Something over and above what you'd normally do. Give that \$30, \$50, or \$100 today to save three, five or ten children but I'm asking you to do even more than that because we need you to do something special today. We need you to do a gift that is over and above. We need you to make a sacrificial gift today. A gift that says I will save as many of those lives as I possibly can. I will express God's heart and I'll extend God's hands. I'll save that child. I'll help that mother. And I'll bring life -- life through my gift.

Please, help me today to honor our promise to these mothers. I made it on your behalf and I need you to make that promise real. You give the best gift you can give today, you give the gift of life.

Begin video clip

Announcer: In impoverished and drought-stricken areas of Africa children are suffering. The

need is great and without food they face severe malnutrition -- even death.

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In the studio

On the mission field

James: Just remember we are able to feed, the missionaries are able to be here because of the

love of God, not just in their hearts but in your heart, those of you who support *LIFE Outreach* and respond to *LIFE Today*.

Why don't you go right now to the phone or go online and make the best gift you can. Help us feed three, five or ten of these children? If you can help feed 100, well, do that. I don't know at what level you're led to participate but for the three children or the five or the ten children, it's important what you do today.

We are feeding kids because of the love of God expressed through people; really, a lot of them -- nothing wrong with you going and doing what you enjoy. We just don't need to forget the others. It's very important that you pray that everyone who can will respond. Don't just pray, be the answer to a prayer. Respond and make the best gift you can.

End of clip

On the mission field

Isak: You've seen just how desperate the situation is here and I really hope that you've dialed that number on your screen. If you haven't been able to get through, please don't give up trying. Don't stop because these lives are relying on you. They really are. So we need you to just persevere, push through and give that gift today.

Guys, I want to thank you for being on this trip this week with us, for coming and seeing the work that's here. Also, just for sharing your hearts with the community. You see how it just lifts them up and it brings such a joy to them because they know that we're going to actually be here to help them save their lives.

But we can only be here if you'll do what you can do. If you'll give the gift that you can give, the gift of life, the gift of love. So please, make sure you dial that number on your screen or you get online and you give that gift today. Give a gift, a special gift over and above what you would

normally do because this crisis situation requires your emergency action. Thank you.